Useful links and places:

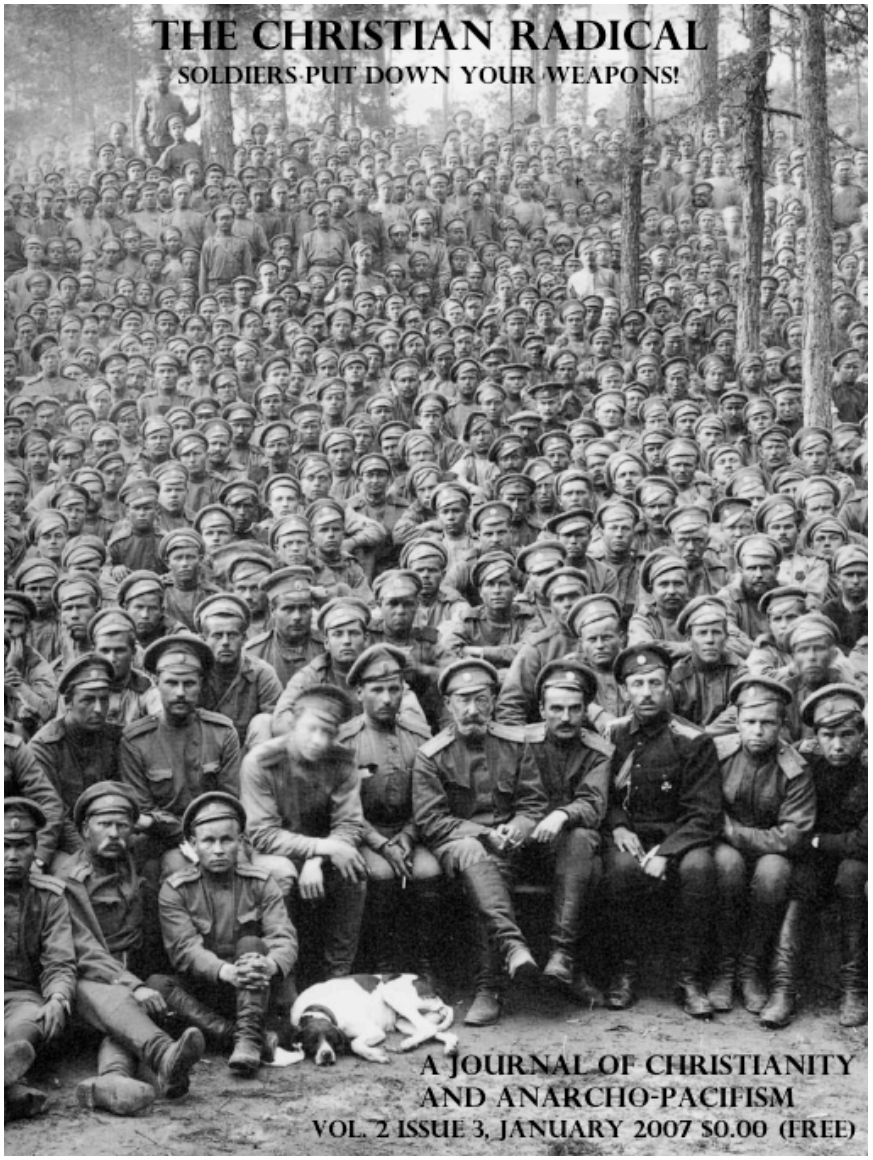
-Catholic Worker Websites:
www.catholicworker.com
www.catholicworker.org
www.lacatholicworker.org
www.ca.geocities.com/vancouvercatholicworker
www.catholicworker.com/bookstore/index.html

-Radical/Progressive Christianity
www.jesusradicals.org
www.nonviolentjesus.blogspot.com
www.geezmagazine.org
www.catholicanarchy.org
www.anglocatholicsocialism.org
www.tierra-nueva.org
www.romancatholicwomenpriests.com
www.desertwisdom.org/dttw

-Anti-War
www.stopwar.ca
www.ivaw.net
www.serve.com/nukeresister
www.resisters.ca
www.wri-irg.org
www.plowsharesactions.org

-Activism
www.foodnotbombs.net
www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook
www.iww.org
www.deathpenalty.org
www.freegan.info/?page=home
www.justicia4migrantworkers.org

-Other Good Websites:
www.vancouverdiy.com
www.pcac.net/indexn.html *(Palestinian Child Arts Centre)*
www.southcentralfarmers.com
www.commongroundrelief.org
www.teachingforpeace,org
www.jonahhouse.org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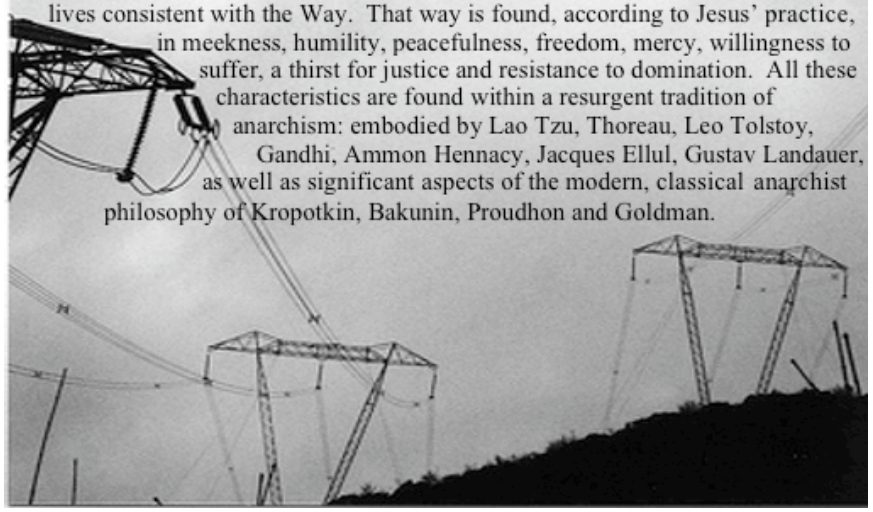
Witness to Life: Anarchism and Christianity

Eric Anglada

The marginal person, the monk, the displaced person, the prisoner, all these people live in the presence of death, which calls into question the meaning of life. He struggles with the fact of death in himself, trying to seek something deeper than death; because there is something deeper than death, and the office of the monk, of the marginal person, the meditative person, or the poet is to go beyond death even in this life, to go beyond the dichotomy of life and death and to be, therefore, a witness to life. Thomas Merton (*Asia Journal*, 306)

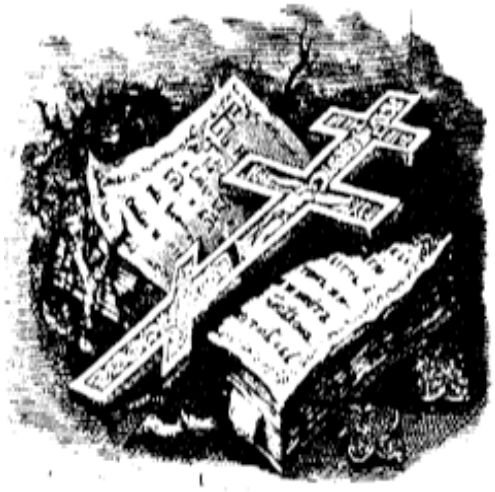
Both anarchism and Christianity are prone to misunderstanding. Anarchism, it is thought, is political, concerned only with life on earth and an attempt to create violence and disorder. Christianity, on the other hand, is thought to be primarily spiritual, neglecting this world for heaven. And when, however rare, they show concern for this world it is to seek the status quo. I want to suggest what is counter to this prevailing view: that Christians and Anarchists have much in common and are both concerned primarily with life here and now, and living it abundantly.

As a Christian, my barometer for understanding life is found in Jesus of Nazareth. If Jesus is "the way, the truth and the life" then understanding this "way" is key to living a true, abundant life. If life is found in the *way* of Jesus, then we must acknowledge that some of those who say "Lord, Lord" aren't necessarily living lives consistent with the Way. That way is found, according to Jesus' practice, in meekness, humility, peacefulness, freedom, mercy, willingness to suffer, a thirst for justice and resistance to domination. All these characteristics are found within a resurgent tradition of anarchism: embodied by Lao Tzu, Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, Gandhi, Ammon Hennacy, Jacques Ellul, Gustav Landauer, as well as significant aspects of the modern, classical anarchist philosophy of Kropotkin, Bakunin, Proudhon and Goldman.



Jesus of Nazareth preached the Kingdom of God, or in the translation of the Gospel of Matthew, the Kingdom of Heaven. The word *heaven* implies something beyond this world, significant only after we die. And yet, what made Jesus so subversive in his day was his unique proclamation that the Kingdom of God is *here*, able to be experienced in this life. If we can live in the Kingdom here and now then we can exist outside of Caesar's kingdom in a state of anarchy, which literally means "without rulers."

The crucifixion was the pre-eminent symbol for victory for Rome over any and all challengers. The Resurrection is the symbol for Christians of Christ's victory over imperial Rome. The common understanding most Christians have is that God demanded the killing of his only Son instead of wiping out the entire human race. In fact this narrative developed a thousand years after Christ's death, and is foreign to early Christianity. For the early Christians the Resurrection was the witness to life that the socio-political world attempted to quell.



There is perhaps even more confusion over anarchism than Christianity. Thanks to a rash of attempted assassinations in the 1890's, anarchists have been stuck with an image of bomb throwing and chaos, which obscures what is otherwise a serious political philosophy. The socio-political arrangement of our society is defined by top-down political organization, individualism, and a bureaucratic, centralized State. Modern anarchism, on the other hand, emphasizes decentralization, mutual aid, organization from below, and voluntary association. As a philosophy anarchism is barely 200 years old, but as an attitude and tendency it exists throughout history.

Though classical anarchists primarily critiqued the state and capitalism, this historical tendency is less of a blueprint and more a lens in which to see how power and domination work in all of their myriad and complex ways. It is in that broader understanding that we can see more clearly the webs of domination that pervade society – consumerism, technology, racism, patriarchy, exploitation of nature and even a critique of certain forms of Christianity that have become oppressive

The early Hebrews were really the first anarchists (though the name did not then exist). They revolted against the oppressive structure of Pharoah. With the firm belief that God had engineered their liberation, the Hebrews created a society without a King, and voluntarily took on each other's needs as their own. One of the most remarkable passages in the entire Bible is found in 1 Samuel 8. Existing as a society without a King, they became unfaithful and desired to be like the other nations. Their desire for a leader, it is clear in this passage, is a rejection of God. They were supposed to be, in Gerhard Lohfink's words, a contrast society - or, in biblical language, the chosen people: their duty was to resist the nations and their proclivity for slavery, war, power – in short all those things that stand in the way of freedom and life. But their failure resulted in exactly what God told Samuel would happen: enslavement, exploitation and militarization. The rest of the Hebrew narrative tells this sad story. Freedom is scary to many people. The Hebrews were no exception. But the prophetic tradition – from Isaiah and Jeremiah to Jesus and the early Christians – calls the people of God back to the Land of the Living, a place of true freedom.

Christianity needs anarchism. Like the Hebrews, Christianity has lost its radical edge. A renewed prophetic tradition is necessarily to help us live faithfully once again. Anarchism provides the possibility for a renewed contrast society which exists as a way of calling back both the church and our world to a place of freedom and life. <

Hunger Strike Second Round

From anarchyinchains.com

The hunger strike will resume January 1st. This will be as a "New Year's Resolution". The strikers are hoping for more participants this time, this way TDCJ will have to pay more attention to their requests if they have to spend extra time watching so many inmates and taking them to medical. If this strike goes on for a long period of time, the medical costs for TDCJ will continue to rise.

The strikers are asking that anyone who knows people in Texas Prisons, specifically AD Seg, to let them know of the strike and see if any would be willing to participate, this strike is against all abusive conditions in the Texas Prison system, not JUST death row. They need as much solidarity as possible to achieve their goal.

Note from Steven:

Comrades...I try to live back here without having my hand out askin ya'll for shit...It's not even a pride thing, I just don't like people wasting their hard earned souls on me...But hey, we don't have access to library & we don't have jobs so I've got to put my hand out... If anyone out there can, my fellow strikers and I would really appreciate donations of literature. Reading is one of the best ways for us to keep our minds occupied back here. Any books sent to me will get passed around to my fellows. And vice versa. Contact the site administrator admin@anarchyinchains.com for information on how to properly send us stuff.

The Illusion of Hope…Is all but gone. A statement of Intent

By Steven Woods

You can see it all the time on the news. All over the internet. U.S. prisoner abuse has run rampant throughout the world. You've seen Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay American soldiers torturing hundreds of people in the interest of democracy, peace, justice, and freedom. It's been turning the collective stomachs of society these past years, as you come to see the face of a beast none want to recognize. You look overseas and ask yourselves, "How can good, solid citizens behave like that?" you wonder, "Where did that monster come from?" The question isn't very hard to answer. That kind of abuse isn't anything new. It's been happening here on American soil for decades. And while it's true that American prisoners don't suffer the depth of those held hostage by Bush Co. Here in Texas, on death row, we are forced to endure some of the harshest and most inhumane treatment imaginable.

For the past several years, I and a few hundred others have been living out what can easily be called a nightmare. After the injustice of being sentence to death by a corrupt legal system (our universal right to life not withstanding), we've been shipped of to be warehoused in a penal institution of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). Upon arrival, we are shorn of our dignity and our identity, caged and treated like animals, while we wait through the years of appeals and the judges eventual signing of our death warrants. We spend these years stored in the Polunsky Unit, in a segregated housing facility that has been designed to house over 500 people in a complete indefinite isolation.

Segregated housing units (also called security housing units – SHU's and control units) have been around for decades, designed to break the most violent and dangerous inmates in the prison system. No one is ever sentenced by a judge or jury to segregation, it's the person's actions once in prison that determines the need for placement here, as a non-punitive measure to maintain safety in and security of the institution. In general, after an inmate is able to prove that they are no longer a threat to the institution, they are placed back into the general population. The same is not true for us. Despite the provision for a non-segregation status in the Texas Death Row plan (the policy outlining death row housing and general procedure adopted by the director of TDCJ to bring the institution into compliance with Texas State Law), men on death row are never allowed to leave isolation.

And yet, it wasn't always like this. From 1965-1999, we were housed on the Ellis Unit, and afforded almost all of the same privileges that maximum-security general population inmates were allowed. We had art programs, group recreation, the ability to work, walk around un-restrained, had religious services, and televisions. We were generally treated better all around. Since being moved to Polunsky, though, life hasn't been the same. We've been put on 22-hour lockdown. We lost all our group recreation, art programs and supplies (except paper and color pencils), work programs, televisions, and religious services. We're not allowed contact visits, so the only physical contact we'll get until they kill us is when the CO's hold our restrained arms while escorting us. According to policy, we're supposed to have a chance to have most of that if we're behaving ourselves. TDCJ's non-compliance with their own policy isn't only incredibly immoral, it's also illegal according to the state constitution's clause against cruel and unusual punishment. Why they're allowed to get away with this is beyond me.

The situation we're stuck in leaves a question begging to be asked: What can we do about it? Unfortunately, an answer really isn't forthcoming, the courts, state, and federal government are apathetic, even hostile to us. We've tried lawsuits, pleas and petitions. Each has been futile, and it has sometimes resulted in further abuse for us, and our outside supporters. One of our main problems is that an insufficient number of us speak up about the abuse. As the minds of our captors and their supporters "if they're not speaking up about it, it can't be that bad". Well, speaking up about it intelligently and effectively has been another problem. And even when it's done, our complaints seem to fall on deaf ears. Over the years, we've also tried several

civil disobedience movements, ranging from general non-compliance to non violent resistance to try and get our complaints heard. All of this, too, to no avail. So if legal remedies and direction aren't helping, what's to be tried next? To answer that, a few of us have come together out of necessity, realizing that it's going to take more drastic measures to try to compel a change. In this regard, as of January 1st, 2007, we've initiated the second round of the hunger strike. We will not accept another morsel of food from our captors until such a time as TDCJ makes a credible effort towards the changes necessary to remove the current inhumane conditions. We have several viable requests we're making to the administration, dealing with health and safety issues, with policies and procedures being ignored and misinterpreted, and with our segregate housing conditions. It's a shame that we have to starve ourselves to be treated decently. We're hoping we don't have to starve to death, but we cannot allow ourselves to be denied our basic human rights. We cannot, we will not live like this any longer.

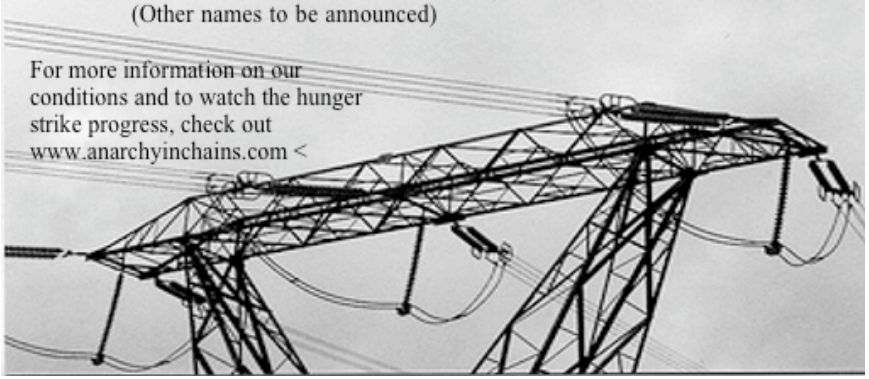
Yet even as we take this drastic step to stand against this injustice, we realize our actions alone will not likely bring the changes we require. We need your support in this struggle, fighting with us side by side. The administration will try to cover up and misconstrue our efforts, so we're asking you to get involved, to put up as much effort as you're able. Any actions you can take to help vocalize our plight are positive, be it writing to government officials, TDCJ administration, the media, participation online blogs and forums, protesting if you are able, and encouraging others to get involved. We'll also need your encouragement and solidarity to help keep us from faltering, as even the most stout of heart can waver. The struggle will be long and hard, but in the end, with your help, we hope to succeed.

In strength, struggle, and solidarity,

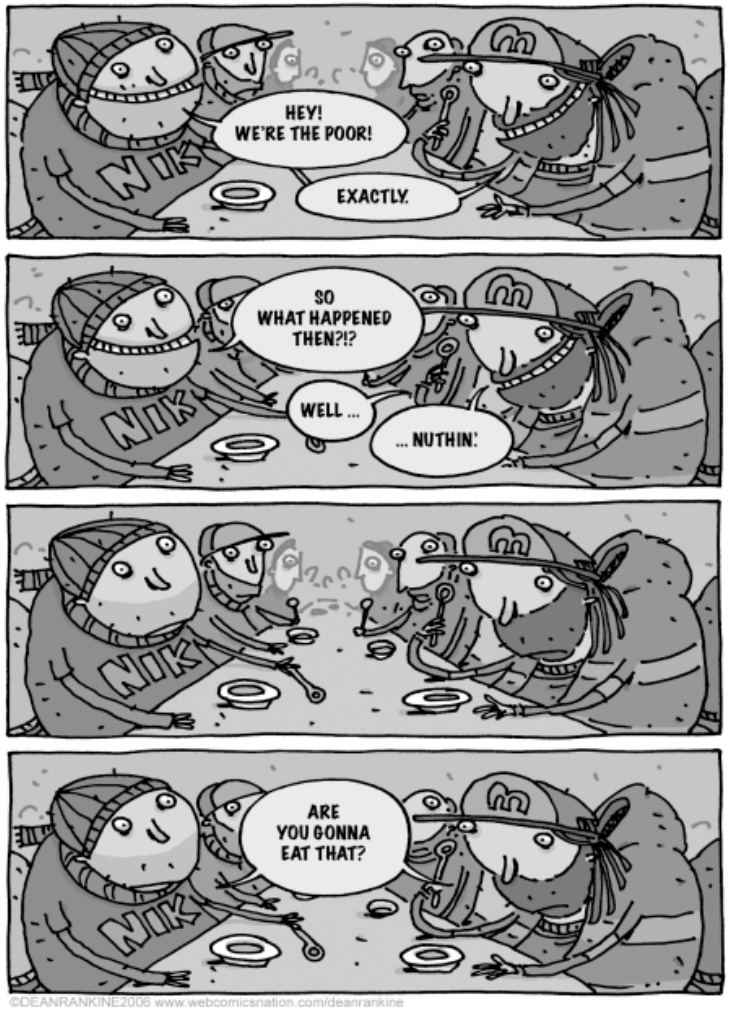
Steven Woods 999427

(Other names to be announced)

For more information on our conditions and to watch the hunger strike progress, check out www.anarchyinchains.com <



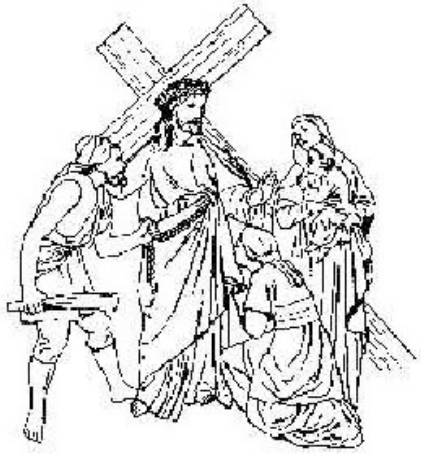
SOUP KITCHEN
SO GET THIS. I'M LYIN' ON ME PARK BENCH THE OTHER DAY AND I SEE THIS RICH GUY GO UP TO JESUS. AND HE SAYS ...
'JESUS, I'M A TOP BLOKE. I'VE KEPT ALL OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS SINCE I WAS A LITTLE KID. SO WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO GET ETERNAL LIFE?'
AND THEN JESUS GOES, 'WELL, IF YOU WANNA BE TRULY GOOD THEN COME AND FOLLOW ME'.
'BUT FIRST GO HOME AND SELL ALL YOUR STUFF AND GIVE THE MONEY TO THE POOR'!



A comic by Dean Rankine

Reflections By Sr. Vicky

Yet Another Look At Sin



All sin, even the big one, The Original Sin, is and was committed because, unlike God, we cannot love perfectly or have perfect love, outside of God's love for us. Consider, if Adam and Eve had been capable of perfect love, they would not have believed the serpent. They would have trusted God with a perfect trust born out of a perfect love. However, the creature cannot equal the Creator. Hence, the creature's love cannot equal that of the Creator.

All the sins that we commit against each other, the earth, animals, and all of creation would not be possible if we could love perfectly. Love that is perfect could not formulate the thoughts necessary for such pain and destruction. That is why we are told by Paul, "And the greatest of these is love", by Catherine of Sienna, "an act is not a virtue unless it is born out of love". Francis of Assisi, Julian of Norwich and holy people throughout the ages have told us to imitate Christ and to imitate Christ is to imitate someone who loved so much that "he laid down his life for his friends."

We are told also that we will receive from God what we ask for. The more we ask to be filled with love, the more we are filled with love, the less room there is for the capacity to sin. I believe sin is an absence of love. While we cannot have the capacity to love perfectly in this life, it is our duty, regardless of our faith tradition, to strive for perfect love as creations of the Perfect Love.

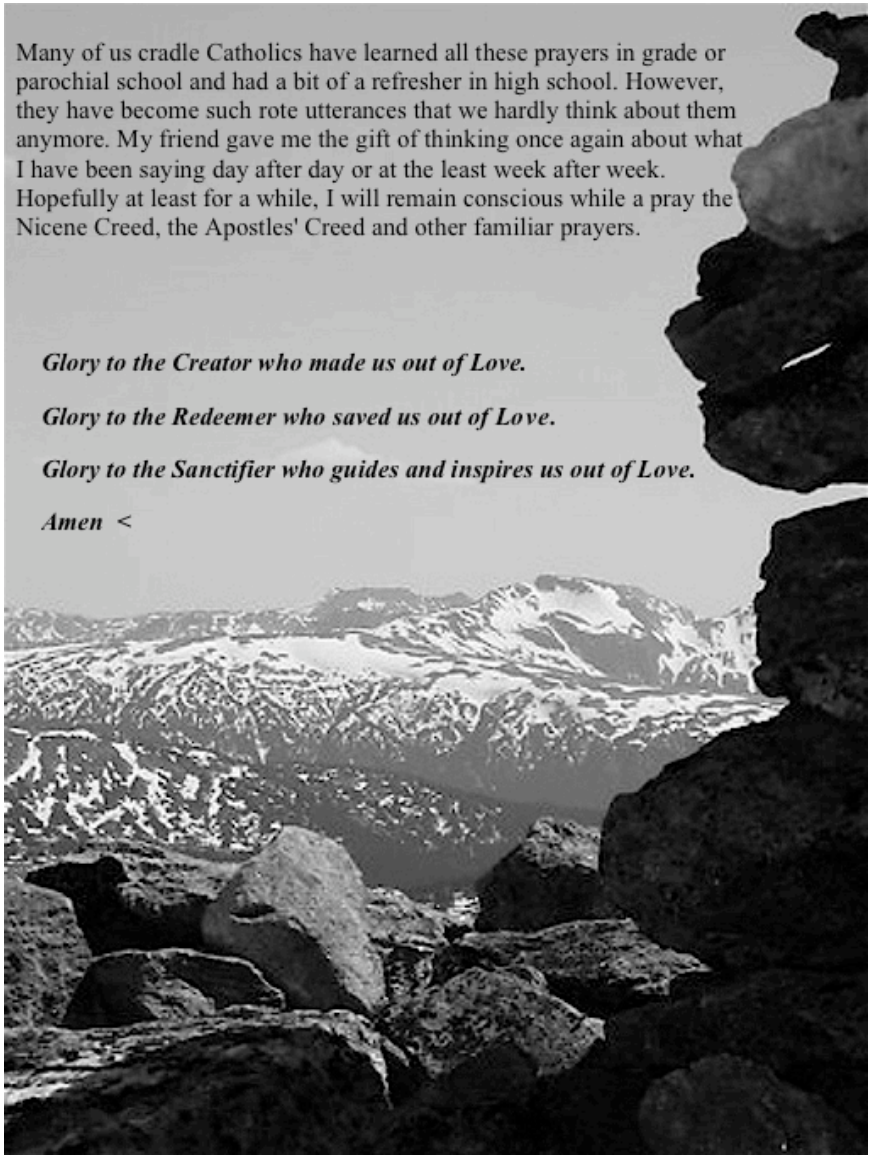
On A Lighter Note

The other day while helping one of our parishioners prepare for her confirmation, she gave me the gift of a wonderfully new perspective. Following the instruction in the catechist's guide, I asked her to draw a circle and divide it into three parts. Then I asked her to put in one part of the circle her beliefs about God, the Father. She put, "He loves me." I was just about to say something concerning her answer-- when I was stopped in my proverbial tracks. I paused. Next, I asked her to put in another part of the circle what she believed about Jesus. Again she put, "He loves me." And so also for the Holy Spirit.

The reason I was taken aback at first by her answer is that we were supposed to be doing the work which led up to the introduction of the Nicene Creed. Of course, I was expecting the pat answers like, "He created the world", "He died on the cross", and so forth. The reason I stopped before uttering a word was because, the Spirit enlightened me to the fact that my protegé had cut to the heart of the matter. The creeds both the Nicene and the Apostle's Creed reiterate "what" the Trinitarian God has done. My astute friend, however, had spoken the "Why". Every act that we believe stated in the Nicene and Apostle's Creeds was done because God loves us.

The book which we use to prepare for confirmation went on later in the chapter to look at the Nicene Creed line by line to explain why our Triune God had done what was done. However, as I have stated my friend had already surmised that part. The reason that I relate this story is because it taught me a lesson that I wish to share.

The time has come to turn and face our brothers and sisters who live and die in our cities and towns and on the streets. It is for us to say with Dorothy Day who helped found the Catholic Worker movement that “We aim to make the rich


Many of us cradle Catholics have learned all these prayers in grade or parochial school and had a bit of a refresher in high school. However, they have become such rote utterances that we hardly think about them anymore. My friend gave me the gift of thinking once again about what I have been saying day after day or at the least week after week. Hopefully at least for a while, I will remain conscious while a pray the Nicene Creed, the Apostles' Creed and other familiar prayers.
Glory to the Creator who made us out of Love.
Glory to the Redeemer who saved us out of Love.
Glory to the Sanctifier who guides and inspires us out of Love.
Amen <

OUT OF THE CLOISTERS AND INTO THE STREETS!

Christian Monasticism and the Challenges Facing Our World.

By Chris Rooney

I have been thinking of writing this article for over a month now. Since discovering the living monastic traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church, I have been re-examining my own attraction to the Catholic Worker movement in this light, and I have been asking myself; what is there in the desert fathers and their descendents that one can apply to the world we live in now? Many answers have been coming to mind and it's my hope to share some of them with you in this essay.

Throughout history people have sought to be as close to God as possible even to the exclusion of human contact. The Buddhists throughout Asia founded monasteries and hermitages everywhere they went and like their cousins the Jainists they made themselves a religion of monks.

In a similar way God called Abraham into the wilderness and it was through his faith in God, that he was sustained, and he was lead into a land he didn't yet know but which he had been promised. The Jews, descendents of Abraham, wandered for forty years in the wilderness north of Egypt where God had freed them from slavery to the Pharaoh. Christ himself, after being baptised was driven by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where he fasted and was tempted for forty days by Satan. After driving the devil away he returned to the world and began his ministry, exorcising demons, curing the ill, forgiving sins, and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

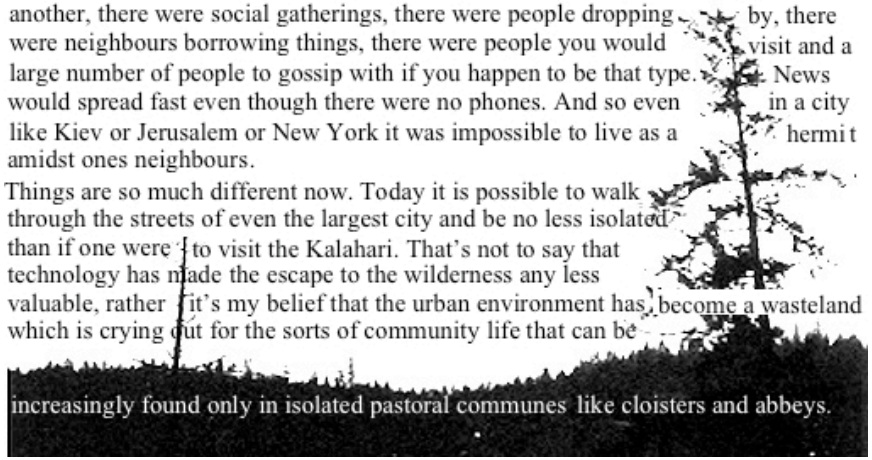
In the two thousand years since the resurrection of Christ and the preaching of his Apostles many people have gone to the wilderness. In Celtic Ireland some of the first monks were Christians who so yearned for the experience of the desert that they fashioned themselves boats and set themselves adrift in the sea trusting in God to do with them what he would. Many of these seafaring hermits washed ashore in the Hebrides, Britain, and even Continental Europe, founding abbeys everywhere they landed, some, like the Iona Abbey community are still in use today.

In the East there is a wealth of monastic writing by the Orthodox fathers much has been said on the search for the inner desert and about the ascetic life in general. It would seem that in the Eastern churches there are two major forces, there is the opulence of the Byzantine Christianity that one would associate with the Tsars or with the Emperor Constantine and his successors. Then there is the monastic side, a photo negative of the former, where the first is bejewelled, ornate and full of luxurious splendour the latter is simple, it is ascetic, it is a hard life of poverty and privation, a life of struggle and one set on nothing less than a perfect union with God through Christ. It is a life in solidarity with the peasants who lived throughout the land in that same poverty, and it is a life of service, of humble discipleship bearing in mind the words of Christ that whatever we do to the very least of our brothers and sisters we do to him.

This striving, this seeking after, which compels the monk to the wilderness was for almost two thousand years an absolute necessity, to live in the world before the advent of the ipod, the TV, the Telephone and the Bomb was to live in a world where people knew one another, where people could recognise their neighbours not simply in an abstract theological way, but in the most immediate sense, the sense where the question "Who are my neighbours?" could be asked out of more than just confusion.

In that world people knew each other's business like it or not. In that world people had to live in community because of the simple fact that they lived beside one another, there were social gatherings, there were people dropping by, there were neighbours borrowing things, there were people you would visit and a large number of people to gossip with if you happen to be that type. News would spread fast even though there were no phones. And so even in a city like Kiev or Jerusalem or New York it was impossible to live as a hermit amidst ones neighbours.

Things are so much different now. Today it is possible to walk through the streets of even the largest city and be no less isolated than if one were to visit the Kalahari. That's not to say that technology has made the escape to the wilderness any less valuable, rather it's my belief that the urban environment has become a wasteland which is crying out for the sorts of community life that can be increasingly found only in isolated pastoral communes like cloisters and abbeys.

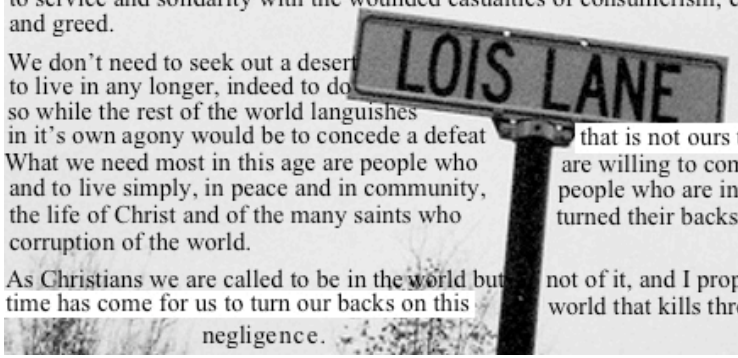


I recall reading somewhere that Fr. Thomas Merton upon his first visit to the monastery where he spent his life remarked after experiencing their community that it was the first real city he had ever seen.

We spend so much of our lives plugged into devices that blind us to the world God made for us. We channel our cities budgets not into caring for the downtrodden or welcoming the penniless travellers but in bylaw enforcement, which is designed to force our poor into neighbouring cities and into the suburbs. We elect people based in part on their vague promises to "solve" the "homeless problem" only to see them allocate funds away from the few existing services that give help and dignity to the poor. Where do these funds go? Often they go towards hiding the problem from sight, whether through gentrification or ghettoisation or funding already brutal or corrupt police forces to harass these people further onto the margins, the money is rarely spent on them, rather it would seem it is spent against them.

So this brings me back to my original line of thought. How is the Good News to be lived in a world where we have spent so much time destroying and subjugating the wilderness, a world where you can be completely alone in a city of millions. This is a world where so many of the very least are dying and being ignored as they suffer in the urban wastelands of modern civilisation. Perhaps the call to deliberate and authentic community that has been a hallmark of movements like the Catholic Worker and of Monastic Christianity should be seriously considered an alternative to the isolated and sterilised life we all know so very well.

In other times it was essential for ardent seekers to seclude themselves, to found communities in the wilderness away from the distractions of life in the world. But in times like ours where the world no longer knows the meaning of community life, where the most populated urban areas have become deserted wastes maybe it is time for people to start coming together intentionally and voluntarily to live out the call to service and solidarity with the wounded casualties of consumerism, capitalism and greed.



We don't need to seek out a deser
to live in any longer, indeed to do
so while the rest of the world languishes
in it's own agony would be to concede a defeat
What we need most in this age are people who
and to live simply, in peace and in community,
the life of Christ and of the many saints who
corruption of the world.

that is not ours to give.
are willing to come together
people who are inspired by
turned their backs to the

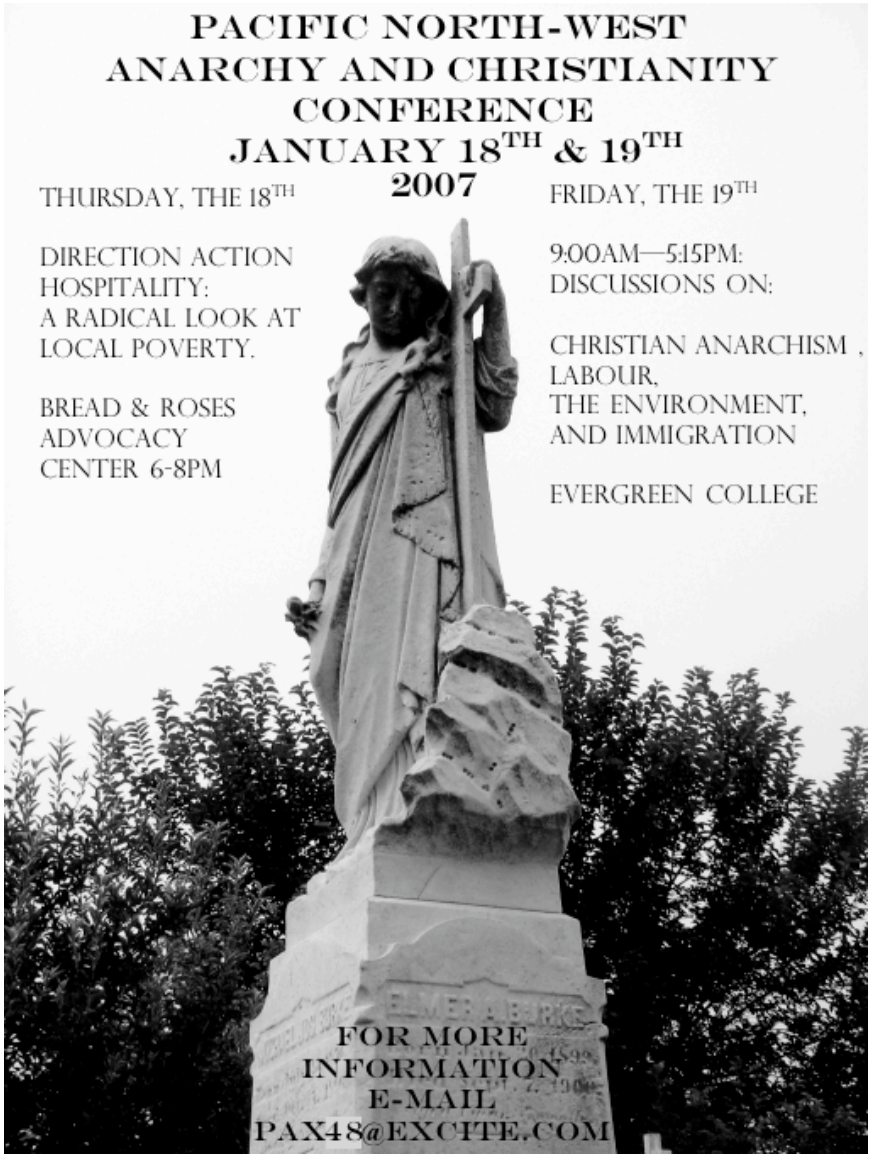
As Christians we are called to be in the world but
time has come for us to turn our backs on this
negligence.

not of it, and I propose that the
world that kills through

man poor and the poor man holy". That it is time for people to start to come together and form communities autonomous of the culture that says it's best to ignore the person begging outside the cathedral. This is already happening, in cities all over the world groups like the Catholic Worker movement, and the Open Door community, and the Jonah House community are forming or have already been doing this work for decades, all we have to do is decide to join in. We aren't just faced with a wilderness where we can retreat to, as Christians we are called to work at healing the wasteland in which we live our lives, by seeing Christ in the guise of the poorest, and there to serve, not with fanfare or with preaching or with arrogance but in humility, and in solidarity, and in love.

If you feed a person don't do it on the condition that they sit through a sermon first, rather feed the person because she is hungry and leave the sermon at home. If you have too winter coats in your closet and you see a man shivering on the corner without one give him yours and don't make a big deal of it. If you are praying for the peace of Christ then turn your prayers into action and volunteer your time to work for justice in your own community. If you are sick with guilt at the gap between the rich and the poor then narrow that gap by living in such a way that you are creating equality. If you are pro-life then don't just picket abortion clinics, picket the prison system and abolish the death penalty! March on the government and demand that our country cease it's military adventurism and get down to the business of making life better for people, instead of trying to force our will on the rest of the world.

I'll finish this essay by echoing the words of Mohandis Ghandi; Christianity wasn't tried and found not to work, it was seen to be too hard and therefore never tried. <



THE SPANISH CGT

The New Anarcho-syndicalism

By Larry Gambone

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I was well received by the International Relations representative of the CGT, (Confederacion General de Trabajo) Angel Bosqued. At first he thought I might be a member of NEFAC as they had recently done a tour of Europe, but I explained that I was only representing myself. We talked for about an hour and I learned a great deal about the history and practices of the CGT. I told him that people in the English-speaking world know almost nothing about contemporary Spanish anarcho-syndicalism and I, in my small way, would do what ever was possible to change that situation. He gave me a pile of CGT literature and took me on a tour of the Barcelona CGT headquarters.

The headquarters was very impressive, consisting of the top floors of a ten or eleven story building. Each of the individual industrial unions, such as teachers, metal workers or communications workers, has it's own office. There are several larger meeting rooms, offices of the Salvador Segui Foundation (a CGT cultural grouping) and a bar- cafeteria with a tiled outdoor lounging area. This has a wonderful view of Barcelona as it is on the ninth floor. Next we went to the archives and library that comprised much of the tenth floor. The library alone consists of some 10,000 volumes on anarchism, syndicalism and related topics.

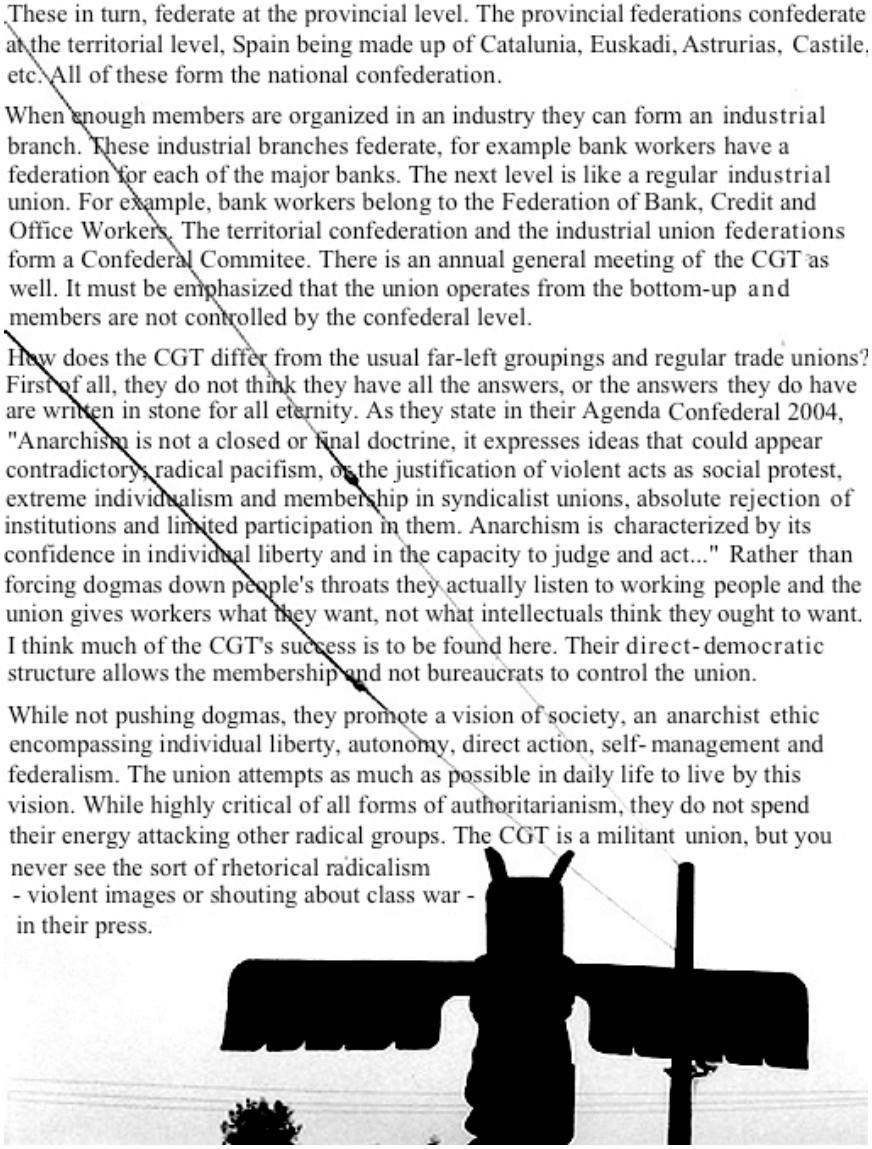
Now the CGT is not some tiny anarchist sect with a dozen members, but is the representative of some one million workers. The Confederation is found in every corner of Spain, and is in fact, the third largest trade union grouping, only exceeded by the Socialist UGT and the Communist CCOO. The CGT is strong among bank workers, television, postal and hotel workers, but also has support among teachers, chemical workers, graphic artists, and cleaning workers. The Confederation is composed of two basic structures, geographical and industrial. At the base lies the local union, which is autonomous. Where there are 75 or more members in a vicinity they can form a union local which is open to all trades. Locals federate together at the city level, or where the city is very large, at the district level.

These in turn, federate at the provincial level. The provincial federations confederate at the territorial level, Spain being made up of Catalunia, Euskadi, Astrurias, Castile, etc. All of these form the national confederation.

When enough members are organized in an industry they can form an industrial branch. These industrial branches federate, for example bank workers have a federation for each of the major banks. The next level is like a regular industrial union. For example, bank workers belong to the Federation of Bank, Credit and Office Workers. The territorial confederation and the industrial union federations form a Confederal Commitee. There is an annual general meeting of the CGT as well. It must be emphasized that the union operates from the bottom-up and members are not controlled by the confederal level.

How does the CGT differ from the usual far-left groupings and regular trade unions? First of all, they do not think they have all the answers, or the answers they do have are written in stone for all eternity. As they state in their Agenda Confederal 2004, "Anarchism is not a closed or final doctrine, it expresses ideas that could appear contradictory; radical pacifism, or the justification of violent acts as social protest, extreme individualism and membership in syndicalist unions, absolute rejection of institutions and limited participation in them. Anarchism is characterized by its confidence in individual liberty and in the capacity to judge and act..." Rather than forcing dogmas down people's throats they actually listen to working people and the union gives workers what they want, not what intellectuals think they ought to want. I think much of the CGT's success is to be found here. Their direct-democratic structure allows the membership and not bureaucrats to control the union.

While not pushing dogmas, they promote a vision of society, an anarchist ethic encompassing individual liberty, autonomy, direct action, self-management and federalism. The union attempts as much as possible in daily life to live by this vision. While highly critical of all forms of authoritarianism, they do not spend their energy attacking other radical groups. The CGT is a militant union, but you never see the sort of rhetorical radicalism - violent images or shouting about class war - in their press.

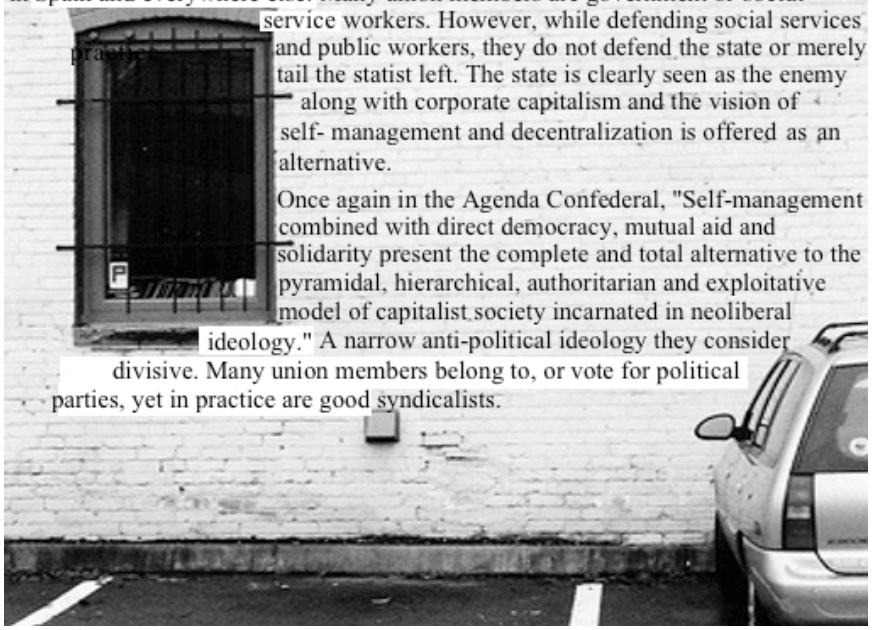


They eagerly work with other unions, which in some manner share their attitudes, attempting to create a global movement of "alternative unionism" and have strong relations with other anarcho-syndicalists such as the Italian USI, the Swedish SAC, and the French CNT-F. The CGT does not regard itself, or even the working class, as the whole struggle, seeing their union as one part of a broad movement comprising peasant unions, ecologists, cooperatives, women's and community groups.

They have good relations with the Zapatistas in Mexico and consider their union to be a member of the Anti-globalist Movement. "The CGT is an anarcho-syndicalist organization... which acts in the working world. But not all the problems are just in this area, nor are workers unaware of this fact. Thus, syndicalists, anti-authoritarians pacifists, immigrants, ecologists, movements against sexism and the Anti-Globalist Movement are in the end one movement, one without `professional revolutionaries' in charge and with the consciousness that the transformation will involve all groups."

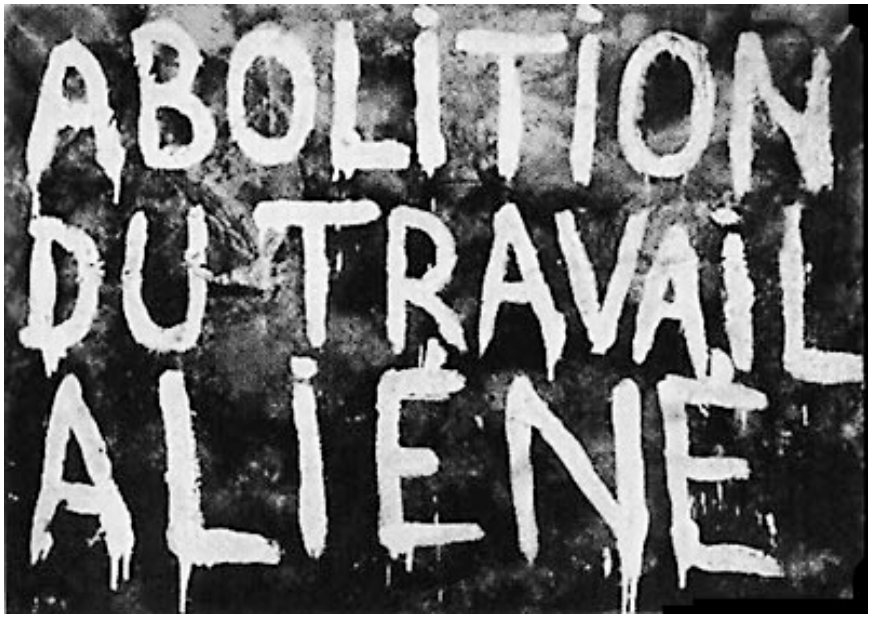
The CGT spends much time attacking the wave of so-called privatizations going on in Spain and everywhere else. Many union members are government or social service workers. However, while defending social services and public workers, they do not defend the state or merely tail the statist left. The state is clearly seen as the enemy along with corporate capitalism and the vision of self- management and decentralization is offered as an alternative.

Once again in the Agenda Confederal, "Self-management combined with direct democracy, mutual aid and solidarity present the complete and total alternative to the pyramidal, hierarchical, authoritarian and exploitative model of capitalist society incarnated in neoliberal ideology." A narrow anti-political ideology they consider divisive. Many union members belong to, or vote for political parties, yet in practice are good syndicalists.



At the same time, the CGT never fails to point out the problems inherent in parliamentary politics and parties. Nor does the union have any time for nationalism but the autonomy of union branches and decentralization allows historically oppressed peoples such as the Basques and Catalonians to have their own language publications and federations. The CGT's success will hopefully rub off on other syndicalists.

Already in France the CNT-F has experienced a surge in support, with some 5000 members, compared with a few hundred a decade ago. Syndicalist groups have appeared in the former Stalinist countries, and although small, may experience growth. Orthodox unionism has crumbled in the face of neoconservatism and maybe workers are open to the ideas of autonomous direct action. And since nothing exists in isolation, a rebirth of anarcho-syndicalism will only benefit anarchists of all varieties. <



Situationist graffiti

Making monsters into martyrs

Further thoughts on the execution of Saddam Hussein

by Chris Rooney

Back in November I wrote a piece for www.readingvancouver.com about the trial and sentencing of Saddam Hussein. Even though at the time he had not been sentenced for his crimes it was impossible to conceive of a world where he would be sentenced to live with his crimes. Hussein had committed unspeakable crimes against the Iraqi people--crimes against humanity--and though he could have been kept for the rest of his life within the walls of one of the many prisons he sent men, women and children to die in throughout his dictatorship, the new Iraqi government decided that what was needed instead as a mock trial and a real execution.

In my last piece on this subject I compared the pending execution of Saddam Hussein to the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld, a burocratic sacrifice on the part of the neo-cons, just like Powell, Ashcroft and Bolten before him, Rumsfeld was jettisoned and replaced with someone equally twisted but not nearly as heatscore, a concession to the angry masses—they're howling for blood so throw them their meat, give them the illusion of change.

The trial of were captured were real or something the court, the patriotic everyone

Hussein was a show, it was high theatre and if its proceedings on tape it would be cinema verite. I won't deny that his crimes that he needed to be brought to justice but he was brought to else. He knew his fate was sealed probably as soon as he entered and it's from his seat in that room that he played out his final act, martyr, the public figure beloved by his supporters and hated by else equally and viciously.

In his last letter from prison and in tones of piety he urged the Iraqi people not to hate the foreign occupiers, just their leaders. He wrote that he was prepared for death he spoke of giving his life up as a sacrifice to God and face whatever fate he will meet before the only truly just court, the one held at the Judgment Seat of God.

Is it possible that he had actually and finally begun to embrace the Muslim religion? Indeed it is, and if only for that reason his death means that whatever personal redemption he could have had in this world we will never know. Is it possible that all this was only crocodile tears, the last attempts of a man with nothing left but the power to incite or deepen a civil war and militarise a political schism? Absolutely it's possible. Once again we will never know because the people who held his life in their hands have closed their palm and dropped the smouldering wick into the dust.

It no longer matters whether he was sincere in his pious and patriotic utterances, and his execution has rendered the debate over his life purely academic.

All this is frustrating, I can't really speak to this situation except as a cynical and privileged outsider and so I am very aware of how my criticism may sound to you reading it. My family never knew political oppression like the Kurds or the Shiites of my generation. I have only been exposed to the depths of real destitution on my few trips to places like Ecuador, West Baltimore, LA and on the Downtown East Side. I do not know what it's like to burn with the kind of hatred that wells up inside the heart of a youth who's whole family has been killed by the countries ruling autocrat and aided by foreign powers and their white oil money. I'm just a cynical North American man and so I am limited in what I can do, I may be able to point out the glaringly obvious but I can add little or no new insight of my own.

The Washington Post broke this story late Friday night and in it there is a quote, which will haunt me tonight and maybe for the rest of my life.

'"It's like God asking you to choose between heaven and hell," said Thamer al-Musawi, 47, a barber in Baghdad's Karrada neighbourhood, speaking before the execution. "If Saddam gets executed, you go to hell. If he doesn't, you go to heaven. I will choose hell just so Saddam is executed."'

This man has said in one short statement what I've needed paragraphs to write about, the question continues to be posed, and through the actions of the Iraqi courts, and the inaction of the American occupation hell was chosen again on Friday. And it’s through the wilful anger, the hatred and the desire to see our enemies’ dead that the world continues to chose hell.

In our quest for vengeance we continue to choose the hell of war without end, the hell of a hatred which consumes everything, leaving behind only a mess of broken lives, the hell of a place where no one is willing to forgive anyone of anything, the hell where those who are living will come to envy the dead, the hell where Saddam Hussein is raised up as a patriot and a martyr instead of forgotten as a relatively minor despot and left to face himself alone inside the walls of Abu Graib.

May God have mercy on us all, for by our silence in the face of the hell we keep choosing we all become complicit and have our hands in it's design. <

We Believe So We Speak

2nd Corinthians 4:13

Steven Woods is currently serving a death sentence at a state prison in Texas. He has a blog at www.anarchyinchains.com If you would like to write to Steven you can send mail to Steven Woods #999427 Polunsky Unit 3872 FM 350 S Livingston, TX 77351.

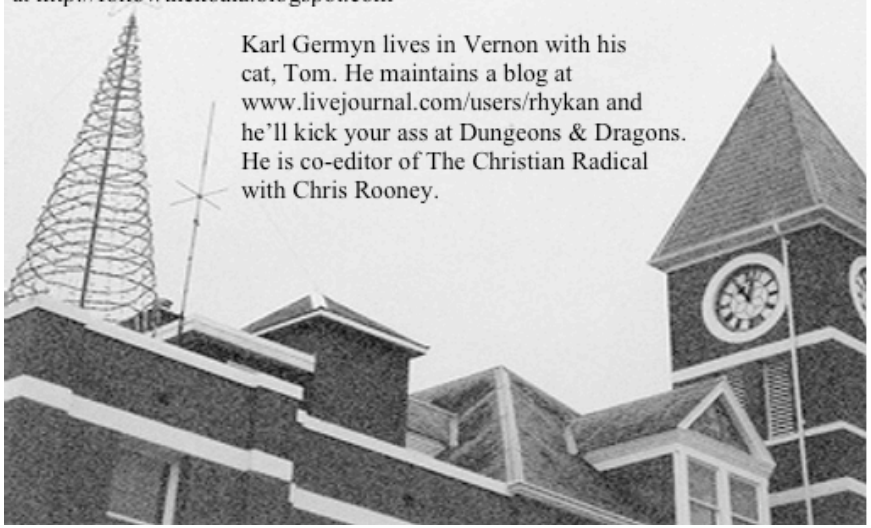
Sr. Victoria Marie is a Franciscan Sister of Joy and co-foundress of the Vancouver Catholic Worker, in Vancouver BC.

Larry Gambone has been an Anarchist since 1968, sympathetic to anarcho-syndicalism and counter institutions he has a blog at http://porkupineblog.blogspot.com and can be reached by e-mail at redlionpress@hotmail.com

Dean Rankine is a part-time Community Development Worker with a Needle and Syringe Program and part-time cartoonist. His comics have appeared in publications worldwide. You can see more of his work online at - www.webcomicsnation.com/deanrankine

All the photos in this zine, except for the cover, were taken by Josina De Bre, a student at UBC and member of Saint Nina's Orthodox Mission in Vancouver BC, she has a blog at http://followthekoala.blogspot.com

Karl Germyn lives in Vernon with his cat, Tom. He maintains a blog at www.livejournal.com/users/rhykan and he'll kick your ass at Dungeons & Dragons. He is co-editor of The Christian Radical with Chris Rooney.



Eric Anglada is co-organizer for the Olympia, WA Anarchism and Christianity gathering. He has lived at the St. Jude Catholic Worker in Champaign, Illinois for the past four years. In 2007 he will be moving to Dubuque, Iowa to help start a Catholic Worker School.You can reach him at pax48@excite.com

Chris Rooney lives in Vancouver Canada. A musician, writer and Catholic Worker, he maintains **www.thechristianradical.blogspot.com** and co-edits this zine with Karl Germyn. He can be reached at **the.christian.radical.zine@gmail.com**

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In last month's issue the article by John Dear was originally written and published Christmas 2005, this information was unintentionally omitted from the published draft.

Chris would like to thank the following people and websites for their clip art: flag-blackened.net, google.com, Sr. Vicky, Kevin Larimee, and anglocatholicsocialism.org

Thank you again for reading.
Chris Rooney, and Karl Germyn
Editors, The Christian Radical